

Joan Cronan



Triumphant collegiate programs are able to distinguish themselves from their counterparts because of superiority on the field of competition and within the classroom.

The integrity and proactive guidance of the person at the helm is what has provided the edge to the University of Tennessee women's athletics department for almost three decades.

So it comes as no surprise that UT Chancellor Jimmy Cheek named Joan Cronan as the Vice Chancellor/Director of Athletics in June of 2011. It is a position she held until September 21, 2011 when Dave Hart moved into the permanent role.

Under the vision and direction of Cronan, a heavily-requested speaker on leadership and motivation on the national and local levels, the University of Tennessee Lady Vols have garnered a reputation as one of the most visible and respected programs throughout the nation.

UT's success in both the athletic and academic realms speak volumes to her decision-making and leadership ability, as demonstrated by appointment to the 2010 NCAA Division 1 Leadership Council and selection of her peers as the president of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics (NACDA) in 2008-09. Cronan is also a former president of National Association of Collegiate Women Athletics Administrators (NACWAA).

Both organizations have also honored Cronan as well. She was selected by NACWAA to receive their 2005 Athletic Director of the Year award. In 2004, Cronan was honored by NACDA with their Southeast Region Athletic Director of the Year award. In 2009, Cronan was presented with the Women of Achievement Award: "Women Who Make a Difference" by the International Women's Forum and in 2011, the United States Sports Academy elected her as an Emeritus Member of its Board of Trustees.

Starting her 29th year at Tennessee in 2011-12, Cronan's continued admiration by her peers and the community is well deserved because of her efforts in facilitating the operation of a first-class program, which has finished in the top two in the Southeastern Conference's Women's All-Sport Award from *The New York Times* for six of the past seven years, including three first-place finishes. In three of the past six years, all 11 Lady Vol teams participated in postseason play. The UT women's athletics department achieved a seventh place finish in the 2007 Director's Cup – Tennessee's highest finish ever. She strives not only to keep UT as one of the premier women's athletics departments in the nation but also to improve women's athletics on a local, regional, and national level.

Cronan joined UT from the College of Charleston in South Carolina, where she served as the athletics director for 10 years and was later inducted into that institution's hall of fame. Under Cronan, the school was selected as the No. 1 women's athletics program in the country in 1980 by the American Women's Sports Foundation.

Closer to home, Cronan is a past president of the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame, is active on the boards of First Tennessee Bank and the YMCA, and has served as vice chair of the Leadership Knoxville board. She also works closely with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Athletes in Action, having served as

a board member for the local FCA chapter and as a national trustee. In 2003, Cronan was inducted into the FCA Hall of Champions. Additionally, she finds time to be a deacon at Central Baptist Church-Bearden.

In 1998, Cronan's work earned her accord from the Knoxville Sports Hall of Fame, as she was named its Administrator of the Year. Other honors include chairing the 1991 Knoxville area United Way Fund Drive, serving as president of the Executive Women's Association, receiving the 1994 Toastmaster's International Communication and Leadership Award, and earning the 1994 AOPi Citizen of the Year Award. In March of 1987, the Women's Basketball Coaches Association honored her hard work, dedication, and success by presenting her with its leadership award. She also won the 1995 regional award for the National Association of Collegiate Women's Athletic Administrators.

Cronan has served on the NCAA's Executive Committee, Championship Cabinet, Management Council, as well as the NCAA's Council, and is a member of the NCAA Leadership Council. She also has been a member of the Southeastern Conference Executive Committee.

As a former coach, Cronan served a two-year stint at Tennessee from 1968 to 1970. In 1969, she led the women's basketball team to an alternate berth in the first-ever National Invitational Collegiate Basketball Tournament. While at Charleston, she continued her success, not only as a basketball coach but in tennis as well. In 1981, she gave up coaching to devote her full-time attention to her duties as teacher and athletics director.

A graduate of LSU, Cronan earned her B.S. in 1966 and her M.S. in 1968, both in physical education. She was a fall 1995 inductee into LSU's Alumni Hall of Distinction. Currently an avid golfer and tennis player, Cronan was ranked as high as second in the South in doubles and is a former state and Southern doubles champion.

Cronan makes her home in Gettysvue. She and her late husband Tom, who passed away on Aug. 18, 2006, after a valiant battle with pancreatic cancer, have two daughters; Kristi (Mrs. Rhett Benner) and Stacey (Mrs. Kent Bristow), both 1994 graduates of UT; three grandsons, Chase Thomas and Reed Kent Bristow, and Quinn Leighton Benner; and two granddaughters, Reese Lauren Benner and Larkin Ann Bristow.